



To: The Football Association, Scottish Football Association, Football Association of Wales, Irish Football Association, Premier League, English Football League, Scottish Professional Football League, Premier League Clubs, EFL Championship Clubs, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DDCMS)

Subject: Rethinking Junk Food Sponsorship in Football

We are writing on behalf of SUGAR SMART – a campaign led by the food charity Sustain and supported by Jamie Oliver – and Healthy Stadia to invite you to join us in taking action to protect our children from the high amounts of exposure to foods and drinks high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS), an issue that a number of UK football clubs are already supporting.

The problem

Childhood obesity is at an all-time high, so it is with significant concern that we see the UK's football associations, leagues and some football clubs continuing to partner with companies that are known for producing HFSS products. By linking themselves to sports bodies, these companies are attempting to associate their products with a healthy and active lifestyle, but in reality, many of their products contain high amounts of saturated fat, sugar and/or salt. For example, a standard 330 ml sugary drink contains approximately 35g of sugar (nearly 9 teaspoons), exceeding the maximum recommended daily amount of free sugars for both children and adults.

The overconsumption of HFSS products contributes to high levels of childhood obesity and tooth decay, and our children are paying the price of this irresponsible marketing:

- Nearly 43,000 under-18s were admitted to hospital for multiple teeth extraction in England in 2016/17, mostly due to rotten teeth associated with sugar consumption.
- Almost 1 in 4 children are above a healthy weight when they start primary school, rising to more than 1 in 3 by the time they leave primary school. This is predicted to increase to half of children by 2020 if we don't take drastic action.

Junk food in Sport

Sponsorship by companies promoting unhealthy products is highlighted in the Government's 2015 *Sporting Future* strategy document, stating that:

'Sponsorship is an area where a number of sports, and individual clubs, have adopted a responsible approach, for example around sponsorship by companies marketing alcohol or high fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) foods. We will continue to discuss with sports the scope for voluntary agreements in this area.' (P.54 - *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation*, HM Government, 2015)

Yet despite a renewed focus on ‘responsible sponsorship’, clubs, leagues and governing bodies are still entering into new partnership deals with companies marketing HFSS products, showing that we need a much tougher stance on the issue. Advertising of HFSS products is now banned across all children's media – including online and social – in a landmark decision to help tackle childhood obesity.

We recognise some of the excellent work undertaken by the community functions of UK leagues and clubs to increase levels of physical activity and educate children on the importance of healthier eating and active lifestyles, and for this they should be applauded. However, sponsorship with HFSS brands and the resulting mixed messages do much to undermine this good work, whilst consumption of many HFSS products such as sugary drinks, crisps and confectionary is not simply a treat for many children, but a daily staple. It is worth noting that the calorie content in a standard chocolate bar is the equivalent to the calories expended by a 14 year old boy walking the length of a football pitch 97 times. In addition, no amount of physical exercise will mitigate the damaging oral health effects of sugary products. Food for thought indeed.

Taking action

We ask clubs and stadiums to join SUGAR SMART and take action to reduce sugar and improve food and drinks – something already undertaken by Millwall FC, Charlton Athletic, Bristol City FC, Plymouth Argyle FC, Bath City FC and Exeter City FC among others – and clubs and catering providers to work with Healthy Stadia to benchmark their current catering offer, and work towards healthier options as the mainstream choice.

We also ask football associations, leagues and clubs not to enter into new partnership deals with HFSS brands as a commitment to protect children's health. Instead, they should promote healthier food and drink as part of education on healthier lifestyles and DDCMS should renew their efforts in tackling the issue.

As the highest participation team sport in the country, it's time football protects children against the marketing of unhealthy foods and drinks and re-thinks its commercial partnerships to address the state of our children's health. We look forward to working with you to help achieve this.

SIGNATORIES: 58 ACADEMICS, FOOD WRITERS, DIRECTORS OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ORGANISATIONS

Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Broadcaster and Food Writer

Professor Graham MacGregor, Chairman and Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine, Action on Salt

Kawther Hashem, Researcher, Action on Sugar

Chris Clarke, Development Manager, Alternative Futures Group

Dr Arif Rajpura, Director of Public Health, Blackpool Council

Paul Cartwright, Chairman, Bournemouth and Poole - Sustainable Food City Partnership

Dr Russell Seymour, Chair, British Association for Sustainable Sport

Linda Hillman, Honorary Secretary, British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry

Dr Arianne Matlin, Head of Health and Science Policy, British Dental Association

Paul Butcher, Director of Public Health, Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council

Professor Tim Lang, Professor of Food Policy, City University of London

Dr Virginia Pearson, Director of Public Health, Devon County Council

Dr Liz Charles, Project Manager, Durham Community Action

Dr Christopher A Birt, President, EU Public Health Association Section on Food and Nutrition

Professor John Middleton, President, Faculty of Public Health

Dr. Jennifer Mindell, Chair of the Health Improvement Committee, Faculty of Public Health

Robin Ireland, Director of Research (Honorary), Food Active

Dr Courtney Scott, Research and Policy Advisor, Food Foundation

Eileen O'Meara, Director of Public Health, Halton Borough Council

Dr Matthew Philpott, Executive Director, Healthy Stadia

Kim Roberts, Chief Executive, HENRY

Matthew Ashton, Director of Public Health, Knowsley/Sefton Council

Mark Stephenson, Relationship Manager, Lancashire Sport Partnership

Dr Kathryn Curran, Senior Lecturer in Physical Activity, Exercise & Health, Leeds Beckett University

Dr Sandra Davies, Director of Public Health, Liverpool City Council

Dr Lawrence Foweather, Senior Lecturer in Physical Activity, Exercise and Health, Liverpool John Moores University

Dr Paula Watson, Senior Lecturer in Exercise and Health Psychology, Liverpool John Moores University

Dr Jayne E Harrison, Consultant Orthodontist, Liverpool University Dental Hospital

Dan Parker, Chief Executive, Living Loud

Danny Ruta, Director of Public Health, London Borough of Lewisham

Dr Gemma Witcomb, Lecturer in Psychology, co-creator of 'The Child Feeding Guide', Loughborough University

Joe Piggin PhD, Senior Lecturer in Sport Policy and Management, Loughborough University

Dr Daniel Parnell, Senior Lecturer in Business Management Manchester, Metropolitan University

Lizzie Panagiotidou, Food Hub Coordinator, North Glasgow Community Food Initiative

Lorraine Tulloch, Programme Lead, Obesity Action Scotland

Professor Russell Viner, President, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

Joanna Lewis, Strategy and Policy Director, Soil Association Food for Life

Ben Reynolds, Deputy Chief Executive, Sustain

Liz Harris, Programme Manager for Population Health, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

Anka Johnston Rnutr, Vice Chair, The Caroline Walker Trust

Dr Mimi Tatlow-Golden, Lecturer in Developmental Psychology and Childhood, The Open University

Dr Simon Williams, Chair, UK Association for the Study of Obesity

Modi Mwatsama DrPH RNutr, Director, Policy and Global Health, UK Health Forum

Professor John R Ashton C.B.E., Former Chair, UK Public Health Association

Dr Jennifer Mindell, Professor of Public Health, University College London

Angeliki Papadaki PhD MSc (Med Sci) FHEA, Senior Lecturer in Public Health Nutrition / Programme Director, University of Bristol

Professor Annie S Anderson, Professor of Public Health Nutrition, University of Dundee

Professor Nanette Mutrie, Director of Physical Activity for Health Research Centre, University of Edinburgh

Professor Sally Wyke, Interdisciplinary Professor of Health and Wellbeing, University of Glasgow

Professor Jason Halford, Chair in Biological Psychology and Health Behaviour, University of Liverpool

Dr Charlotte Hardman, Lecturer in Appetite & Obesity, University of Liverpool

Dr Emma Boyland, Senior Lecturer in Appetite and Obesity, University of Liverpool

Professor Amandine Garde, Director of the Law & Non Communicable Disease Unit, University of Liverpool

Professor Simon Capewell, Professor of Clinical Epidemiology, University of Liverpool

Professor Susan M. Higham, Professor of Oral Biology, School of Dentistry, University of Liverpool

Professor Mike Rayner, Professor of Population Health, University of Oxford and Chair of Sustain

Professor Kate Hunt, Institute of Social Marketing, University of Stirling

Johanna Ralston, CEO, World Obesity Federation

NOTES

[SUGAR SMART](#) is a campaign run by Sustain and the Jamie Oliver Food Foundation encouraging local authorities, organisations, workplaces and individuals to reduce the amount of sugar we all consume. There are nearly 50 cities registered to run campaigns and 600 organisations involved in reducing sugar, from schools to sports clubs, restaurants, hospitals, dental practices and workplaces.

[Healthy Stadia](#) works with governing bodies, stadium operators and clubs across Europe to develop sports venues as health promoting settings. Healthy Stadia specialises in developing evidence-based guidance and interventions addressing the key lifestyle risk factors of physical inactivity, poor diet and tobacco for stakeholders, benefitting the health of fans, staff and local communities.